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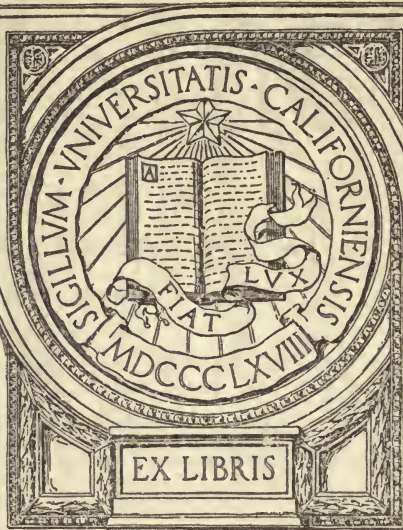
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Van Buren. Speech.

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SPEECH

(VI)

OF

Martin

MR. VAN BUREN,

OF NEW YORK,

DELIVERED IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

ON THE

MISSION TO PANAMA,

MARCH, 1826. /

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1826.

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Speech.

The following Resolution, reported by the Committee of Foreign Relations, being under consideration, viz:

"Resolved, That it is not expedient at this time, for the United States to send any Ministers to the Congress of American Nations, assembled at Panama"—

MR. VAN BUREN, of New York, addressed the Senate, in substance, as follows:—

It is with great reluctance, Mr. President, that I rise to address you. The cause of that reluctance shall be stated with frankness, but without asperity. I entertain no feelings but those of perfect liberality towards gentlemen with whom it is my misfortune to differ. Claiming for myself an entire freedom of opinion, I yield it cheerfully to them. With their motives I do not interfere. That they are pure no one will question. But, against the course pursued by the advocates of the mission, I do object. It is my right to do so; a right which I shall exercise freely, but respectfully.

The subject before us presents a question entirely new. It is one, too, of intense interest, involving considerations which, when once fully understood, cannot fail to excite the deep solicitude of our constituents, and ought to fill us with proportionate anxiety. It has grieved me to hear it announced, on different occasions, and in various forms, that gentlemen had so definitively made up their minds as to render discussion unavailing. I venture to affirm, that a similar course has never been pursued in a deliberative assembly. Cases have occurred where the sinister designs of a factious minority have been defeated by a refusal to reply to speeches made after a subject had been fully discussed, and with the sole view of embarrassing the operations of Government; but to commence the consideration of a great national measure with the declaration, on the part of its advocates, that it ought to be settled by a silent vote, is an occurrence, in the annals of legislation, which, as it now stands without precedent, will remain, I trust, forever, without imitation.

It is not for me to advise those with whom I differ in opinion: nor am I disposed to arrogate a privilege to which I have no claim. I will, however, with permission, and in all kindness, in-

treat gentlemen to reconsider the propriety of a course which cannot, I am persuaded, receive the sanction of their deliberate judgments. Let each determine for himself whether it will read well in the history of this measure, that its progress through this House has been marked by a circumstance of so extraordinary a character. Entertaining an entire confidence in the motives of gentlemen, I will still encourage the hope, that they will diffuse the light which has brought conviction to their minds; and, as far as practicable, divest themselves of all predetermination. This hope alone induces me to trespass, for a moment, on the time of the Senate.

Nothing can contribute more to a just decision of the question before us, than a correct understanding of what that question is. I will endeavor to state it.

A Congress of deputies from several of the Spanish American States, is to be held at the Isthmus of Panama. The objects, powers, and duties of the Congress, are set forth in certain treaties, formed by those of whom the Congress will be composed.

The United States were not parties to these Treaties, but, subsequently to their formation, it was thought advisable, by some of the States, to invite us to join them. Foreseeing the difficulties which might prevent an acceptance of their invitation, and unwilling to impose the necessity of a refusal, these States, with a commendable delicacy, made an informal application to our Government to know if it would be agreeable to it, that such an invitation should be given. On receiving this intimation, the President had before him the choice of one of several courses. If he believed that the attendance of an authorized Agent of the United States at Panama, with suitable instructions, would be beneficial, it was competent for him to have sent a private agent, at the public expense, with proper credentials. If he had thought it more advisable, because more respectful, he might have directed our Ministers at Colombia and Mexico, or either of them, to repair to the proposed seat of the Congress, instructed to express the interest we take in the success and prosperity of the States there assembled, to explain to them the principles of our policy, and the reasons which dissuaded our Government from uniting in the Congress, and to communicate whatever else, in the opinion of the Executive, the interests of the United States required. Or he might have expressed his desire, that the invitation to the United States, to be represented in the proposed Congress, should be given, and, as far as his constitutional power extended, determined to accept it. He has chosen the latter; and if the Senate approve, and Congress make the necessary appropriation, his decision will of course supersede any other steps which might have been taken. But, if the Senate do not approve, or Congress refuse the appropriation, either of the other measures may still be adopted. Their execution is

within the constitutional competency of the Executive, and the contingent fund will supply the means. It will be seen, therefore, that the question is *not* whether measures shall be taken to avail ourselves of all attainable advantages from the assembly of the Spanish American States, but whether they *shall be of the character, and in the form proposed*. That form is, to send a representation, on the part of the United States, to the Congress of Panama, according to the invitation given to our Government, and its conditional acceptance. I cannot give my advice and consent to this measure; and, in assigning the reasons for my dissent, I hope to be excused for omitting to notice some of the topics so largely dwelt on, in former debates, on the subject of Spanish American Affairs: such as the geographical description and great extent of these States, the character of their inhabitants, moral, physical, and intellectual, the injustice of their first enslavement, the odious tyranny practised upon them for a succession of ages, and the cruelties inflicted by their unnatural mother during the war of independence. Subjects which, although they may at times, have produced some of the finest effusions of genuine patriotism, have also not unfrequently been the theme of wild and enthusiastic, not to say frothy and unprofitable declamation. We have had enough of such essays.

I will not say that they have become stale, because I would not so speak of any honest efforts in the cause of public liberty. For the present, at least, they would be misdirected. The condition of things is changed. Affairs have advanced. The colonies, whose distressed condition has occasioned these strong appeals to our sympathies, are now of right, and in fact, free and sovereign States. Their independence has been deliberately recognized by us and other Powers, in the face of the world; and, though not yet acknowledged by Spain, (or likely soon to be,) is held by as good a tenure, and stands, I hope, upon as firm a basis, as our own. They have severed the tie which bound them to the mother country; and, unlike ourselves, have achieved their liberation by their own, unaided, efforts. As they have thus won an honorable station among independent States, it becomes our imperative duty to treat with them as such. In our intercourse with them, as with all, it should be our first and highest concern to guard, with anxious solicitude, the peace and happiness of our own country; and, in the fulfilment of this duty, to reject every measure, however dazzling, which can have a tendency to put these great interests at hazard. Whether the measure, now proposed, will endanger those interests, or whether there is not reasonable ground to apprehend it, is the question. To this will my observations be directed, alike regardless of all extraneous excitement, and indifferent to the unmerited suspicion of being lukewarm in the cause of South American liberty.

The first points which naturally present themselves for our consideration, are the character of the Congress, and the limitations under which it is proposed that the United States should become a party. In the former are embraced the objects of the assembly, present and future; the powers of the deputies; its duration, whether temporary or permanent; and its manner of acting, whether legislative or diplomatic. In the latter are embraced the portion of the concerns of the Congress, in which the United States are invited to participate, and the manner of that participation. Upon some, if not all these points, it must be admitted, we are without satisfactory information. But the fault, if fault there be, in this particular, does not lie at our door. There was a time when the Executive required, as a condition precedent to the acceptance of the invitation, an adjustment of several preliminary points, such as "the subject to which the attention of Congress was to be directed; the nature and form of the powers to be given to the diplomatic agents who were" to compose it; and the mode of its organization and action." But that condition was afterwards, and I cannot but think improvidently, dispensed with. When this subject was first laid before us, we were furnished with no evidence, upon some of the points referred to, except the little that could be gleaned from the letters of invitation. It was not until the 10th of January, in compliance with the call of the Senate, of the 4th, that the treaties, in virtue of which the Congress is to be held, were sent to us. Sir, the inroads which the insinuating, not to say insidious, influence of Executive authority has made upon the rights and privileges of this body, from which so much was expected by the framers of the Constitution, are great indeed. This remark is not made with particular reference to the present Executive. The history of our Government, for many years, presents an unbroken series of similar encroachments. The relation in which the President stands to the Senate, when acting under the treaty-making power, is essentially different from the other relations prescribed by the Constitution. He has Executive duties to discharge, in which the legislature have no participation, duties which ordinarily commence when theirs have terminated. Information, in his possession, relating to that branch of his public duties, it is his right to communicate or withhold from Congress, as, in his opinion, may best subserve the public interest. By the Constitution, also, the exclusive right of nomination to office is given to him, and the Senate are called on, only, to approve or disapprove. There, too, he acts distinct from us, and possesses a discretion, though, perhaps, more limited, with regard to the communication of information. But on the subject of treaties, the case is evidently different. They are to be *made* "by and with the advice and consent of the Senate." Upon that subject, every step, preliminary as well as final, ought, in the spirit of the Constitution,

to be submitted to the Senate. The practice of conceding to the Executive the preliminary steps in a negotiation, first adopted from convenience, and since acquiesced in from habit, is now considered by some as an unquestioned right. But in the early administration of the Government it was different. General Washington, pursuing the spirit of the Constitution, before commencing any new negotiation, laid before the Senate the views of the Executive, the instructions proposed to be given to ministers, and all the information in his possession, and then asked the benefit of their counsel. *He* appears to have thought that information necessary to both should be viewed in all respects as the common property of both. But now, instead of those full and explicit communications, a portion, only, of the requisite information is sparingly doled out—just enough to satisfy the successive calls of the Senate; calls always made with reluctance, because considered by some as implying an unwillingness to communicate what may be desired. It will be recollected, that it was not until the 2d of February, that the Senate obtained the information upon which it consented to act. It is not my intention to impute to the Executive a disposition to suppress any thing connected with this subject. I have no reason to believe that these views exist. It is to the practice itself which he found on entering into office, that I have deemed this a proper opportunity to object, not without a hope that a remedy may be applied. It is known to every member of the Senate that, from this cause on the subject before us, its deliberations have been embarrassed, and its action impeded.

Hoping to be excused from a digression not wholly irrelevant, I shall proceed to the discussion of the subject.

What is the character of the Congress of Panama, first, as it respects the Spanish American States, by whom it is constituted; and secondly, the footing on which our Representatives are to stand. Is it to be, as asserted by the gentleman from Rhode Island, a mere diplomatic council, held for convenience in negotiation, with power to make and receive proposals, but without authority to bind the represented States? or is it to be an efficient public body, the permanent organ of a confederation of free States, formed for great national purposes? In short, is it to be an *advising* or an *acting* body?

The Treaties between the Republics of Colombia and those of Peru, Chile, Mexico, and Guatemala, formed in the years 1822,

* The President, in his late Message to the House of Representatives, adopts a similar construction of the Treaty. His opinion is founded on the matter here discussed, and upon nothing else. The question remains: Is that construction the true one? Does it comport with the views and intentions of the Spanish American States, who have instituted the Congress? It is respectfully contended that it does not.

'23, and '25, so far as they relate to the institution and character of the Congress, are alike. By these Treaties, a permanent League and Confederation, in peace and war, is established among the parties: containing guarantees of the Territories of the respective States, and stipulating for contributions in ships, men, and money, for the common defence. In a word, they provide for the union and application of their joint means, for the purpose of promoting the general good of the Confederate States, reserving to each its sovereignty in whatever relates to its internal concerns, and certain portions of its foreign relations. The second, third, and fourth articles of the Treaty between Colombia and Chile, are in the following words:

"ART. 1. The Republic of Colombia and the State of Chile are "united, bound, and confederated, in *peace and war*, to maintain "with their influences and forces, by sea and land, as far as circumstances permit, their independence of the Spanish nation, "and of *any other* foreign domination whatever; and to secure, after "that is recognized, their mutual prosperity, the greatest harmony "and good understanding, as well between their people, subjects, "and citizens, as with other Powers with which they may enter "into relations.

"ART. 2. The Republic of Colombia, and the State of Chile, "therefore, voluntarily promise and contract a League of close "alliance and constant friendship, for the *common defence*, for the "security of their independence and liberty, for their reciprocal "and general good, obliging themselves to succor each other, "and repel, in common, every attack or invasion which may, in "any manner, threaten their political existence.

"ART. 3. In order to contribute to the objects pointed out in "the foregoing articles, the Republic of Colombia binds itself to "assist, with the disposable sea and land forces, of which the number, or its equivalent, shall be fixed at a meeting of Plenipotentiaries.

"ART. 4. The State of Chile shall also contribute with the disposable sea and land forces, of which the number, or its equivalent, shall likewise be fixed at said meeting."

The other Treaties contain stipulations of similar import. For the Confederation thus formed, a National Council is provided, composed of two deputies from each of the Confederate States: they are to meet at Panama; but if ever, from the accidents of war, or for any other reason, that should be deemed an improper place, a majority of the States may remove it to some other spot in *Spanish America*. Its objects and powers are thus stated in the Treaties: "A General Congress shall be assembled, composed "of Plenipotentiaries from the American States, for the purpose

“of establishing on a more solid basis, the intimate relations which should exist between them all, individually and collectively : and that it may serve as a Council in great events, as a point of union in common danger, as a faithful *interpreter* of public Treaties, in cases of misunderstanding, and as an *arbitrator* and conciliator of disputes and differences.”

Now, for the purpose of simplifying the question, permit me to ask, can the two specific objects and duties of the Congress, viz: the *interpretation* of treaties, and the *umpirage* of all disputes and differences between the confederate States, be effected upon the limited construction now for the first time given to its powers ; a construction resorted to, and enforced with much ingenuity, by the gentleman from Rhode Island, when the dangerous steps we are about to take are fully presented to his view. Upon further reflection, that gentleman cannot fail to detect the fallacy of the reasoning, by which he has been induced to adopt a construction against the express letter of the treaties. He asks—where are the powers by which the Congress is to enforce its decisions ; none are given ; hence he infers, that they are only authorized to *advise*, but not to *direct*. Permit me to ask the worthy gentleman to define the character of our Congress under the Articles of Confederation. Was that a mere diplomatic council—an advising power—a convention of Diplomatsists met to negotiate, but not to decide ? It was a legislative body, acting to the extent of the powers conferred. If the gentleman will compare the treaties by which the Congress of Panama is established, with our Articles of Confederation, he will perceive a striking similarity between them. Our “Congress was declared to be the last resort or appeal for all disputes or differences now subsisting, or that may hereafter arise, between two or more States, concerning boundary, jurisdiction, or any other cause whatever.” Was any direct power conferred to enforce its decisions ? Not at all. That Congress was left, as the Congress of Spanish American States is left, to the obligations resting on each of the confederate States, to abide by the decisions of a tribunal of their own creation, and to the known consequences of contumacy. Our Congress, it is true, had the express power to decide on peace or war. But was it clothed with the means of sustaining their decision ? Was it not wholly dependent on the voluntary contributions of the States ? The gentleman also refers to the stipulation contained in the treaties, securing “the exercise of the national sovereignty of each of the contracting parties, as well as to what regards their laws, and to the establishment and form of their respective Governments,” &c. &c. By adverting to the Articles of our Confederation, he will again find a stipulation “that each State should retain its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, juris-

dition, and right," which was not expressly delegated to the United States. But if he be correct in supposing that this Congress will be a mere diplomatic meeting, for the purpose of negotiating treaties in the usual form, and without power to bind any State *except by its own consent*, whence the necessity of this reservation? Does he not perceive that the very fact of inserting the exception, on which he so confidently relies, overthrows the argument he attempts to sustain by it? It can require no argument, or elucidation, to establish the permanent character of the Congress; it has no limitation as to time in the treaties. It is to be the Congress of the Confederation, and of course to last as long as the Confederation endures. Such is the necessary result, and that such is the design of its founders, appears from the provision authorizing the removal of the seat of Government, by the vote of a majority, if *ever* the casualties of war, or any other cause, may render it advisable to do so. There is no express stipulation as to the manner of acting by the Congress. Our Government required information upon this point, and afterwards, as I have already stated, consented to act without it. But that its decisions are to be governed by a majority, results from the propriety of that course, from the equality of representation, from the provision that such shall be the case, in relation to the place of meeting, and the absence of any other provision in regard to the other concerns of the Congress. This view of the subject is confirmed by the letter from the Government Council of Peru, to the Government of Buenos Ayres, of the 2d of May last, urging a union in the arrangements of the Congress, in which, after stating that if the world had to *elect a Capital*, "the Isthmus of Panama would be pointed out for that august destiny; placed as it is in the centre of the globe, looking on the one side to Asia, and on the other to Africa and Europe: that the Isthmus had been offered for *that purpose* by the Republic of Colombia; that it was at an equal distance from both extremities, and, on that account, might serve as a provisional place for the *first* Assembly of the Confederates." It is added, that, "in the first conference between the Plenipotentiaries, the *residence* of the *assembly*, and its *powers*, may be settled in a solemn manner, by *the majority*, after which every thing will be arranged to our satisfaction."

We have been invited to unite in a Congress thus constituted. The Executive asks our consent to his acceptance of that invitation. What are the limits contained in the invitation, and the restriction prescribed in the proposed acceptance? They consist in this, and in this *only*: that the United States shall not be called upon to do any act, during the continuance of the *present* war between Spain and the other States, which will conflict with our neutral obligations. If there be any other restriction or limitation, I call upon

gentlemen to point it out. I affirm that there is none. I do not ask gentlemen for the suggestions or opinions of those either within or without doors. I appeal to the documents by which we are to judge now, and by which we shall be judged hereafter. If no other is pointed out, I shall assume that none exists. We are then invited to become a member of the proposed Congress, and of *this confederacy of American States*. If the views of the Executive are not such as the documents import, why, in the communications made to us, are we not specially advised upon this point? But we are not without evidence of the most explicit character. We have called upon the Executive for information. Among other things sent us, are extracts from the correspondence between Mr. Clay and Mr. Poinsett, our Minister at Mexico. When the declarations of one of our Ministers, bearing distinctly upon a question before the Senate, made directly and officially to a foreign Government, is sent to us by the Executive, without explanation or disavowal, I know not how we are to avoid the conclusion, that the Minister has spoken a language authorized by his Government. More especially must that be the case when the declaration of the Minister, instead of being disavowed by his Government, is substantially in accordance with the declarations of its official organ, the Secretary of State. If this assumption be correct, much light, as to the views of our Government, may be derived from the correspondence before referred to, between Mr. Poinsett and Mr. Clay. In the letter of the former to the latter, of the 28th September, 1825, we find the following sentiments: "I first objected to the exception in favor of the American Nations, formerly Spanish possessions, on the ground that no distinctions ought to be made between any of the members of the Great American Family. That Great Britain having consented to such a provision, ought not to influence the American States, because the Republics of America were united by *one and the same interest*, and that it was the interest of the European Powers to cause such distinctions to be made, as would divide it into small confederacies, and, if possible, to prevent us from uniting, so as to present one front against the attempts of Europe, upon our Republican Institutions." And afterwards still more explicitly, as follows: "I then recapitulated the course of policy pursued towards the Spanish colonies, by our Government, which had so largely contributed to secure their independence, and declared what *further* we were willing to do to *defend their rights and liberties*, but that this could only be expected from us, and could only be accomplished by a *strict union of all the American Republics*, on terms of perfect equality and reciprocity; and repeated that it was the obvious policy of Europe to divide us into small confederacies, with separate and distinct interests; and as manifestly ours

“to form a single great confederacy, which might oppose one united front to the attacks of our enemies.”

So far from disapproving the sentiments thus avowed by Mr. Poinsett, in his letter of the 28th September, Mr. Clay in his despatch to Mr. Poinsett, of the 9th November, holds the following language: “Again the United Mexican Government has invited that of the United States to be represented at the Congress of Panama, and the President has determined to accept the invitation. *Such an invitation has been given to no European Government, and ought not to have been given to this, if it is not to be considered as one of the American Nations.*” It is, therefore, fair to conclude, that the language of Mr. Poinsett to the Mexican Government was authorized by his own; and if this be conceded, the views of the Executive must be such as I have contended. With these views, ought we to join a Congress thus constituted? I contend we ought not if we could, and that the power to do so is not conferred by the Constitution. I will not detain the Senate by the discussion of either of those points. The first is too plain to require elucidation—and in noticing the second, (the constitutional objection,) I only repeat an objection, first made on this floor by my friend from Virginia, (Mr. RANDOLPH.) The distinct and impressive view he has taken of it, and the knowledge that the point has been fully considered, and will be thoroughly discussed, by at least two other gentlemen, (Messrs. BENTON and BERRIEN,) induces me to desist from doing so myself.

Such, in my judgment, is a correct view of the first great question arising on the subject of the Panama Mission. I will now ask the attention of the Senate to the next branch of the subject, viz: THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED at the Congress, and particularly that portion of it in which we have been invited to participate. Unless I greatly deceive myself, the difficulties will be found to multiply as we proceed in the discussion of the matters proposed to be acted upon, so far as the United States are concerned. There are those which in the view of the Spanish American States, as well as of our own Government, are of primary importance; and others of a secondary character, which, although they would not have furnished adequate inducement for the invitation or acceptance, are still deemed worthy of consideration if our ministers attend. *Of the former, stipulations on our part to make common cause with the Spanish American States, in the event of any European Power assisting Spain to re-establish her dominion in Spanish America, and resistance to European Colonization on this continent, stand in the front ground.* But for these, the United States would never have been invited to send a representative to the Congress of Panama. But for these, the presence of our deputies would cause embarrassment, instead of affording facilities to the confederate States. Never in the course of the little experience which it has been my good or ill fortune to have had in public affairs, have

I been more thoroughly disappointed, as to the probable course of discussion upon any point than I have been upon this. That our Ministers, or Commissioners, or Deputies, or whatever else they may be called, shall be fully empowered to enter into an agreement (in whatever form gentlemen may please)—first, that the United States, upon the happening of the *casus fœderis*, the interference of any of the Powers of Europe, in the struggle between Spain and her revolted Colonies, shall make common cause with the latter in repelling such interference; and, secondly, that we shall resist, either jointly or separately, all attempts on the part of any European Power to establish new Colonies in this hemisphere, are matters so precisely enumerated, and so clearly concurred in by all parties, that I did not imagine either that the views of our Government, or those of the Spanish American States, in regard to them, could be misunderstood by any honorable gentleman. Judge then of my surprize, to hear it denied from all quarters that such views are entertained by the Executive—to hear it announced, that if there were grounds to believe that any such agreement was contemplated, there would be perfect unanimity in the Senate in checking, in its birth, a design so adverse to the interests of this country. A state of things so unexpected, necessarily changes the course of discussion from an attempt to prove the impolicy of the contemplated measure, to the establishment of the position that such, in reality, are the views of the Executive. From the year 1818 to 1823, a sort of rivalry existed in this country, between the President, (Mr. MONROE) and a *quasi* opposition to his administration, on the subject of Spanish American affairs. On the one hand, the boldest steps were taken to impel the administration to the recognition of the independence of Spanish America, accompanied by unreserved censures on the imputed reluctance and timidity of the Government. This spirit was combatted, on the part of the administration, by ascribing their conduct to a prudent and circumspect policy, designed to effect the greatest good with the least possible hazard. Time will not permit the enumeration of the various acts of the contending parties on the political arena in reference to this matter: suffice it to say, that, in 1823, Mr. MONROE determined to crown the measures of the Government upon this subject, by adopting a course in relation to it, to which, while it rendered efficient service to the Spanish American cause, could not fail to secure to his administration the reputation of being its greatest patron. In pursuance of this policy he, in his Message of December, 1823, among other things, said—“We owe
“it, therefore, to candor, and to the amicable relations subsisting
“between the United States and those Powers [the Powers of Europe]
“to declare that we should consider any attempt on their
“part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere, as
“dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing Colonies

„or dependencies of any European Powers, we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their Independence, and maintained it, and whose independence we have on great consideration and on just principles acknowledged, we could not view any interposition, for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling, in any manner, their destiny, by any European Power, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States, in the war between those New Governments and Spain. We declared our neutrality at the time of their recognition; and to this we have adhered, and shall continue to adhere, provided no change shall occur which, in the judgment of the competent authorities of the Government, shall make a corresponding change on the part of the United States, indispensable to their security.” And further, in the discussion with Russia relative to the Northwestern coast of this continent, the occasion was embraced, “for asserting, as a principle, in which the rights and interests of the United States were involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent position which they had assumed and maintained, were thenceforward not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European Power.”

The character and effect which has been given, or attempted to be given, to these declarations, is full of instruction as to the probable consequences of similar acts at this day. To say *here* that they did not pledge the United States to any course, would be superfluous. There are few who require to be informed that no declaration of the Executive could have that effect. But he had no such intention. He asserted (if you please) correct principles, but left us at liberty to act, or not, in enforcing them, as our interest or our policy might at the moment require: a question to be decided like all similar questions, by determining whether, under all circumstances, it will best promote the honor and interest of the Country to act or stand still. But how strangely have these declarations been distorted not only by others, but our public functionaries themselves. In a letter from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Colombia, to the Envoy of the Republic of Buenos Ayres, of the 6th of March last, announcing the assent of the Republic of Peru, to the proposition of the General Assembly of the American States at Panama, and requesting the concurrence of the Government of Buenos Ayres, it is stated that among the objects of the Congress will be “to take into consideration the means to give effect to the declaration of the President of the United States of America, in his Message to the Congress last year, concerning the means to prostrate any ulterior design of colonization upon this continent, by the Powers of Europe, and resist all interference in our domestic concerns.”

In the letter of invitation from the Mexican Minister, Mr. Obregon, of the 25th of November last, he says the "Government of the subscriber, never supposed nor desired that the United States would take part in the Congress about to be held, in other matters than those which, from *their nature* and importance, the late administration *pointed out* as being of *general interest to the continent, for which reason*, one of the subjects which will occupy the attention of the Congress, will be the *resistance or opposition to the interference of any neutral nation in the question and war of independence between the new Powers of the continent and Spain*. The Government of the undersigned apprehends that, as the Powers of America *are of accord* as to resistance, it behoves them to discuss the *means* of giving to that resistance all possible force, that the evil may be met if it cannot be avoided; and the only means of accomplishing this object is by a previous *concert* as to the *mode* in which each of them shall lend its co-operation," &c.

"The opposition to colonization is in the like predicament with the foregoing."*

Having thus specified the objects of deliberation, he invites our Government to send "*Representatives*" to the Congress of Panama, with authorities as aforesaid, and with *express instructions* upon the *two principal questions*.

Mr. Salazar, the Colombian minister, in his letter of invitation of the 2d November last, thus expresses himself upon the topics referred to: "The *manner* in which all colonization of European Powers, on the American continent, shall be resisted, and *their interference in the present contest between Spain and her former colonies prevented*, are other points of great interest. Were it proper, an eventual alliance, in case these events should occur, which is within the range of possibilities, and the treaty, of which no use should be made until the *casus fœderis* should happen, to remain secret; or, if this should seem premature, a *convention so anticipated* would be different means to secure the same end, of preventing foreign influence. This is a matter of immediate utility to the American States that are at war with Spain, and is in accordance with the repeated declarations of the *Cabinet of Washington*."

Mr. Canas, the Minister of the Republic of Central America, says, that, "as Europe has formed a *Continental system*, and held

* "Most of the new American Republics have declared their entire assent to them, and they now propose, among the subjects of consultation at Panama, to take into consideration the means of making effectual the assertion of that principle, (resistance to European colonization,) as well as the means of resisting interference from abroad with the domestic concerns of the American Government." President's message to the House of Representatives.

“ a Congress whenever questions affecting its interests were to be
 “ discussed, America should have a system for itself, and assem-
 “ ble, by *its Representatives in Cortes*, when circumstances of ne-
 “ cessity and great importance should demand it.”

The views entertained by those Governments, as to the condition of the United States, in relation to its obligation to resist any attempts on the part of Europe upon the two subjects referred to, appears still more clearly from the fact, stated by our Secretary of State, (Mr. Clay,) that when, in the course of the last summer, an invasion of the Island of Cuba was apprehended, from the appearance of a French fleet in our waters, we were promptly called on, by the Government of Mexico, to fulfil the alleged *pledge* of Mr. Monroe, in his message of December, 1823. Such are the views and expectations of the Spanish American States, in inviting us to the Congress of Panama.

Permit me now to show how far these extravagant pretensions have been encouraged, countenanced, and recognized, by our own Government. I confess, sir, that I approach this part of the subject with regret and disappointment. If I know my heart, it harbors no inclination to view either this or any measure of the Government, with any other feelings than those of liberality and indulgence. But, if there be here no cause for censure, I am under the influence of the grossest delusion.

I have before had occasion to allude to the correspondence of Mr. Poinsett, our Minister at Mexico. The discretion of this gentleman is well known, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive, that he would commit the honor and interest of his country, upon a point of great delicacy and importance, unless authorized by the letter of his instructions. The communications from the Executive contain no intimation of his having transcended his instructions; and the striking coincidence between *his* declarations, and those of the Secretary of State, leaves little ground to think that he has done so. In his letter to Mr. Clay, of the 28th of September last, speaking of his discussions with the plenipotentiaries of the Mexican Government, upon the subject of the Commercial Treaty, then under negotiation, he says: “ To these observations, I replied that, against the power of Spain, they had given sufficient proof that they required no assistance, and the United States had PLEDGED THEMSELVES not to permit any other Power to interfere, either with their independence, or form of Government; and that, as, in the event of such an attempt being made by the Powers of Europe, *we would be compelled to take the most active and efficient part, and to bear the brunt of the contest*, it was not just that we should be placed on a less favorable footing than the other Republics of America, whose existence we were ready to support at such hazards.”

The language of the Secretary coincides with that of Mr. Poinsett. In his letter to the latter, of the 9th November, he thus expresses himself: "No longer than about three months ago, when an invasion by France of the island of Cuba was believed at Mexico, the United Mexican Government promptly called upon the Government of the United States, through you, *to fulfil the memorable pledge of the President of the United States in his message to Congress of December, 1823. What they would have done, had the contingency happened, may be inferred from a despatch to the American Minister at Paris, a copy of which is herewith sent—which you are at liberty to read to the Plenipotentiaries of the United Mexican States.*"

Mr. President—Consider, for a moment, the entire coincidence between the language expressed abroad by Mr. Poinsett, our minister, and at home by Mr. Clay, the responsible organ of the Government, and if you do not concur with me in thinking it amounts to a recognition of a pledge on the part of the Government, of the character claimed by the Spanish American States, and an avowal of our readiness to redeem it, I will hereafter distrust the clearest deductions of my understanding. Had the opinion of the Executive been different, the language of our Government, instead of declaring what we would have done, "had the contingency happened," would have been, what it ought to have been, an explicit disavowal of all obligation on the part of the United States to take any other part in any state of things, than that which the interests of the country might be supposed to require. But if a doubt could exist as to the views of the Executive, it would be dispelled by a reference to the invitations and letters of acceptances, especially when connected with the subjects referred to. In the letters of invitation, the Mexican and Colombian Ministers, specify the subjects which, in their view, are of "*general interest to the Continent, viz—resistance to European interference—and colonization—and request that our Ministers should have express instructions upon these two principal questions.*" Our Government, without questioning the specification, thus made at their instance, in the letters of acceptance, say, that our *Commissioners to the Congress of Panama* will be fully empowered and instructed upon all questions likely to arise in the Congress, on subjects which the Nations of America have a common interest. What those subjects are, had been stated by the parties inviting, with express reference to our explanations, and unequivocally assented to by us.* The President, in his

* The views here taken, are, it is contended, confirmed by the last Message of the President to the House of Representatives. The expressions of Mr. Poinsett were referred to in support of the following declaration of the Mexican Minister, contained in his note of invitation: "The Government of the undersigned apprehends that, as the Powers of America are of accord as to resistance,

message communicating the nominations, leaves the subject of European interference in the struggle between Spain and her former Colonies, to the correspondence between the Secretary of State and the inviting Governments, to which I have referred; but on the subject of colonization he contemplates an agreement between all the parties represented at the meeting, "that each will guard, by its own means, against the establishment of any future European Colonies within its borders." If these two prominent points were not intended, by our Government, to be the subjects on which stipulations were to be entered into at the Congress, what was meant by the President in his declaration to the ministers of Mexico and Colombia, that, in his opinion, "such a Congress might be highly useful in settling several important questions of public law, and in arranging other matters of *deep interest to the American Continent?*" And if it be indeed true that the proposed mission is designed to be no more than a matter of compliment to our sister Republics, without subjecting the rights or duties of the United States to the decision of that Congress, then why the solicitude, on the part of our Government, to adjust previously the powers to be given to the deputies, and the mode of its organization and action? But I forbear to multiply proofs upon this point. Had it

"it behoves them to discuss the means of giving to that resistance all possible force, that the evil may be met if it cannot be avoided? and the only means of accomplishing this object, is by a previous concert as to the mode in which each shall lend its co-operation." And of that of Mr Salazar, the Colombian Minister, that these views are "in strict accordance with the repeated declarations and protests of the Cabinet of Washington." Mr. Poinsett, in his communication with the Mexican Government, urges favorable commercial stipulations, on the ground of our liability to aid the Spanish American States, in resisting European interference in their internal concerns. Mr. Clay, in his letter to Mr. Poinsett, refers that obligation to "the memorable pledge of the President of the United States, in his Message to Congress, in December, 1823." In the report communicated to the House of Representatives, with the Message now referred to, the Secretary says: "If, indeed, any attempt by force had been made by allied Europe, to subvert the liberties of the Southern Nations on this Continent, and to erect upon the ruins of the free institutions, monarchical systems, the people of the United States would have stood pledged, in the opinion of the Executive, not to any foreign State, but to themselves and their posterity, by their dearest interests and highest duties, to resist to the utmost such an attempt; and it is to a pledge of that character that Mr. Poinsett alone refers." These are but different modes of accounting for and describing the same thing. An obligation, on our part, in a certain event to assist Spanish America, equally warranting the inference that the Southern Republics expect that stipulations upon that subject will be made at the Congress of Panama, and that our Government are willing to do so; no one supposed that Mr. Poinsett had been specially instructed to make or renew any pledge upon this subject, or that he had done so. He was instructed to "impress the principles of the Message of Mr. Monroe, in 1823, upon the Government of the United Mexican States," and he has done it in a manner satisfactory to our Government. What that manner was, the above extracts from his letter shew.

not been for the strong manifestation of unwillingness, on the part of the Senate, to enter into any such agreement, I am strongly inclined to think no question would have been made respecting it. With these Governments, above all others, it is both our duty and policy to observe the most scrupulous sincerity and good faith. With them, at least, we ought not to encourage expectations not intended to be realized—a course alike reprehensible in principle, and ruinous in its effects. It is, then, the design of the Executive to enter into an agreement at the Congress, (it is not material for the present in what form,) that if the Powers of Europe make common cause with Spain, or otherwise attempt the subjugation of Spanish America, we shall unite with the latter, and contribute our proportion of the means necessary to make resistance effectual: and further, that we shall bind ourselves, at that Congress, as to the manner in which we shall resist any attempts, by the European Powers, to colonize any portion of this Continent. This design has been fully, frankly, and explicitly stated to the Spanish American States, and to us. Is the Senate of the United States willing to sanction a measure of that description? I care not for the present whether it be by treaty or by act, decree, or ordinance of the Congress. Will you in any shape or form, preliminary or final, give to it your sanction? Upon this subject, at least, we have had “thoughts that breathe.” In the confidence that I do not misunderstand them, I will venture to affirm that there is not a member on this floor who will avow his willingness to enter into such a stipulation. If mistaken, I desire to be corrected. No—I am not. Whatever may be his views, no one, within these walls, is yet prepared to give his sanction to such a measure—a measure by which the peace of the country is to be exposed to a contingency beyond the control of our Government—by which the great question of peace or war will be taken from the Representatives of the People—by which, instead of retaining that freedom of action, which we now possess, we shall bind ourselves, in a certain event, to pursue a certain course, whatever those, to whom the government of the country may then have been committed, shall think the honor or interest of the country may require—by which, in the language of the Father of his Country, we “shall quit our own to stand on foreign ground.” No—thank Heaven—a policy so opposite to all the feelings of the American People; so adverse, as I firmly believe it to be, to its true interests, has no friend, at least no advocate on this floor. If, by any act of ours, we contribute to its adoption, it will be, (and I derive infinite satisfaction from that conviction,) through a mistaken belief that the measure of which I speak is not contemplated by the Executive. It has, I know, been said, that if such views are elsewhere entertained, they can be effected by Treaty only, and that the Senate may refuse its sanction. That this would be the fate of such a treaty, is certain.

But, if correct in my position, that the Executive has distinctly apprized you of his intention to negotiate such a treaty, with what propriety can you refuse to ratify? What excuse can you give your friends, the Spanish American States, for the entire prostration of all the expectations you have raised?

What justification will you be able to render to your constituents for the exacerbation which would result from the rejection of stipulations, deriving sanction from your acquiescence, if not your approval? None, that I can perceive; none, most certainly, that they will approve.

But let it be supposed that I mistake the intention of the President and his cabinet—that our Ministers are to have no such instructions. Reject, if you please, the irresistible evidence of a fixed determination on the part of the Executive, to form, with the South American States, a dangerous political connection.* What, let me ask, will be the consequence of declining a proposed co-operation? Let it be remembered that they consider the recognition of their independence by Spain as essential to their security; that their only ground of apprehension is the assistance which may be yielded to Spain by the Powers of Europe, and that, to prevent this aid, they place reliance on the anticipated compact with us. Can there then be a doubt whether a failure to enter into the proposed stipulations would tend to impair our friendly relations? Will they not refer you to your own exposition of the message of Mr. Monroe, of 1823; to the assurance given by Mr. Poinsett to the Mexican Government; to the despatch of Mr. Clay in reply to their application; to the explicit avowal of *their* motives in inviting us to the Congress; and to our unreserved acceptance of that invitation? And if holding to our view this mass of evidence, which, unfortunately, it would not be in our power to palliate, to cancel, or deny, they should charge us with insincerity and duplicity—where would we find an advocate so unblushing as to attempt our justification, or

* In the late message of the President to the House of Representatives sent after the decision of the Senate, he represents his views upon this subject, in the following explicit terms:

“Compare our situation and the circumstances of that time, with those of the present day, and what, from the very words of Washington, then, would be his counsels to his countrymen now? Europe has still her set of primary interests with which we have little or a remote relation. Our distant and detached situation, with reference to Europe, remains the same. But we were then the only independent nation of this hemisphere, and we were surrounded by European colonies, with the greater part of which we have no more intercourse than with the inhabitants of another planet. Those colonies have now been transformed into eight independent nations, extending to our very border. Seven of them, Republics like ourselves, with whom we have an immensely growing commercial, and *must* have, and have already, important political connections.”

to urge that our conduct had been marked with the frankness and singleness of purpose which are the surest defence of all Republican Governments, and have hitherto been the boast and glory of our own? The fair fame of our Republic would be tarnished—shame would precede our approach—and disgrace follow in our path. Is it possible, if such be the natural, the inevitable result of the favorable construction assumed by the advocates of the mission, that the mission itself can receive the sanction of the Senate, or the support of the People?

The subject I have thus far considered, is avowedly the principal inducement to the mission. Others, of subordinate character, have been thrown out for consideration; but I affirm that there is not one wholly free from serious objection—not one from which there is reasonable ground to expect either credit or advantage. I will briefly consider those suggested in the message. And first, that which may justly be said to be least objectionable: “*The consensual adoption of principles of maritime neutrality,*” such as, “*that free ships shall make free goods, and the restriction of reason upon the extent of blockades.*” To effect this object, it is not necessary to unite with the Congress of Panama. It may be reached in another way. That it can be better attained at the Congress is mere conjecture. The probability is different. No evidence is afforded that the ministers of the confederate States will be empowered to enter into treaties concerning their foreign relations. But, should it be otherwise, what great object remains to be accomplished? With the Republic of Colombia, standing at the head of the confederacy, we have already entered into a treaty, containing all the proposed stipulations. With that of Central America, we have been alike successful. With Mexico, we have reason to believe that a similar treaty has been formed, and *we know*, if our negotiation with that Government is not yet finally concluded, that this point presents no serious obstacle. Can it, then, be urged by any honorable member, that he apprehends serious difficulty in negotiating treaties with the smaller States, similar to those we have already concluded with the larger? I think not. Why, then, go to Panama?

But, if any such object could be accomplished at the Congress, is this the time most suitable to effect it? In my judgment it is not. The reasons are obvious. Those States are at war. Their views, like those of other States, will be controlled by their condition. The relation of neutral and belligerent is not the state best adapted to the amicable adjustment of neutral rights. The interests of the parties are adverse—the war in which they are engaged, involves their existence, and they may not now be disposed to believe the adoption of a principle is expedient, because they know it to be just. But when are the principles, proposed to be established, to have their beneficial operation? During the present war they can-

not. Take, for instance, the stipulation that free ships shall make free goods. A modern condition attached to that stipulation is, that it shall be binding only in cases where the property sought to be protected by the flag of the neutral, belongs to the citizens or subjects of a country, whose Government is bound by a similar engagement. We have a stipulation in our treaty with Spain, that free ships shall make free goods. Suppose the case of goods belonging to the citizens of either of the Spanish American States, found on board of one of our vessels. Will Spain respect it? No. She denies the capacity of her revolted colonies to enter into treaty stipulations, and she seizes the property as belonging to her rebellious subjects. Unless, therefore, you can force Spain to recognize their independence, you cannot oblige her to respect, as far as regards them, this article in our treaty with her. If Spain does not, as she assuredly will not, will the Southern Republics? Can you expect it? Ought you to ask it? *And Spain and those Republics are the only belligerents.* If the operation of the desired stipulations is to be deferred to a future period, to that period let their settlement be also deferred. At present there is little reason to hope that, upon this point, any advantageous stipulation can be made at the Congress. The enumeration of these objects may serve to make, on paper, an imposing parade; but on paper only.

I forbear to notice the objectionable manner in which these principles of international law are proposed to be settled; the occasion does not require it.

"The indirect influence which the United States may exercise upon any projects or purposes originating in the war, in which the Southern Republics are still engaged; which might seriously affect the interests of this Union," is another of the objects referred to by the Executive as among the "contingent and eventual motives" to the mission. I subscribe to the complaints of the worthy gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. White) of the want of clearness in the diplomatic language held throughout upon this subject. Why not specify what those "projects or purposes" are supposed to be, so that we may act understandingly? This part of the message is however supposed to refer to the probable designs of the confederate States upon the Islands of Cuba and Porto Rico. The gentleman from Rhode Island (who, unlike most of those who agree with him in opinion, has assigned the reasons which will determine his vote, supposes that nothing can be decided by the Congress on this subject. In this he is doubtless mistaken. We have before us abundant evidence, that, if the independence of Spanish America is not recognized by old Spain, the fate of those Islands is to be settled by the Congress of Panama. Mr. Salazar informs our Government "that the fortune of these Islands must be *decided in* the Congress of the Isthmus of Panama:" Assuming (as we may) that this will be the case, can we effect any

thing by sending a representation to that Congress? I have earnestly reflected on this branch of the subject, as one in which the United States are deeply concerned, and the result is a conviction that under existing circumstances, no benefit whatever can result from the measure proposed. Before I assign my specific reasons for this opinion, I shall be excused for a brief reference to the novel and embarrassing position of our deputies in offering advice on the fate of Cuba and Porto Rico. They must present themselves as the representatives of a Power which seeks a peace through the mediation of another Power, which maintains, *theoretically*, the right of Spain to the islands in question; as the representatives of a Power which has advocated a peace by which they are to be forever condemned to Spain. They go to confederate with a Congress of free States for the purpose of *resisting* the designs of the Holy Alliance; and of *supporting*, so far as Cuba and Porto Rico are concerned, the views, if not the doctrines of the Holy Alliance; and that too under the auspices of the very head of that unhallowed combination. We affect to glory in the success of the principles upon which the revolution of Spanish America is founded—but still consent to become the advocates of a peace which will condemn Cuba and Porto Rico to the yoke of Spain; and, for the very justifiable and consistent reason, that our *interests* require it!! But, leaving these glaring inconsistencies to their merited fate, what are we to do? What can we do? It is contended that the interests of our country require that the condition of Cuba should remain unchanged. That upon this point we should hazard every thing. Admit the fact; will our Ministers be allowed to take that ground? Can the *Executive* instruct them to protest against any movements on the part of the confederate States against those Islands? To admonish them of its impropriety, and denounce resistance? No, sir. Upon a subject of such vital importance, the only one in which our presence at the Congress could be useful, the Executive has already taken a step which he can never retrace. Deceived by the artful letter of Count Nesselrode; misled by the unsuspecting confidence of Mr. Middleton; and supposing that the Emperor Alexander would undertake, in earnest, the desired mediation, and that, under his high auspices, its success would be inevitable; he has solemnly declared that we *ought not* and *will not* resist the attempts of the confederates upon these Islands, should Spain refuse compliance. In the letter from Mr. Clay, to Mr. Middleton of the 10th of May last, instructing him to invite the mediation of Russia, which *was read to the Colombian Minister*, and communicated to the principal European Governments, it is declared, “and thus the Peninsula, instead of deriving the revenue and the aid so necessary to the revival of its prosperity from Cuba and Porto Rico, must be further drained to succor those islands; for it cannot be doubted, that the new States will direct their com-

"bined and unemployed forces to the reduction of those valuable islands. They will naturally strike their enemy wherever they can reach him, and they will be stimulated to the attack by the double motive arising from the richness of the prize, and from the fact that those islands constitute the rendezvous of Spain, where are concentrated, and from which issue, all the means of annoying them which remain to her." Having understood that an expedition was fitting out at Carthagena against Cuba or Porto Rico, by Colombia, or Mexico, or both, our Secretary of State, on the 20th of December last, addressed notes to the Ministers of those Governments, in which, after assuring them that by late advices from St. Petersburg, he was enabled to say that the appeal to the Emperor of Russia had not been without effect, and that there was reason to believe that he was then exerting his friendly endeavors to put an end to the war, he solicited their Governments, in the name of the President, "to forbear to attack those Islands until a sufficient time has elapsed to ascertain the result of the pacific efforts the great Powers are now making on Spain." These communications were transmitted by those Ministers to their respective Governments; and finally, in the letter from the Secretary to Mr. Middleton, of the 26th of December, he thus explicitly communicates the views and opinions of this Government on the subject: "We cannot allow the transfer of the Islands to any European Power. But if Spain should refuse to conclude a peace, and obstinately resolve on continuing the war, although we do not desire that either Colombia or Mexico should acquire the Island of Cuba, *the President cannot see any justifiable ground on which we can forcibly interfere.* Upon the hypothesis of an unnecessary protraction of the war, imputable to Spain, it is evident that Cuba will be her only *point d'appui* in this hemisphere. *How can we interpose, on that supposition, against the party* CLEARLY HAVING RIGHT ON HIS SIDE, *to restrain or defeat a lawful operation of war?* If the war against the Islands should be conducted by those Republics in a desolating manner; if, contrary to all expectation, they should put arms into the hands of one race of the inhabitants to destroy the lives of another; if, in short, they should countenance and encourage excesses and examples, the contagion of which, from our neighborhood, would be dangerous to our quiet and safety; the Government of the United States might feel itself called upon to interpose its power. But it is not apprehended that any of those contingencies will arise, and consequently, it is most probable that the United States, should the war continue, will remain hereafter, as they have been heretofore, neutral observers of the progress of events." Mr. Middleton was directed to communicate the contents of this letter to the Russian Government, and they were, doubtless, also communicated to the Colombian and Mexican Ministers, with the views which induced the communication to them of the former letter to

Mr. Middleton on the same subject.* Now, Sir, should the confederate States think the invasion of those Islands necessary to the successful prosecution of the war, can our Ministers at the Congress, with these deliberate opinions and unequivocal declarations of our Government, raise a voice against the measure? If they did so, would not the deputies from the other States charge our Government with insincerity? would not the evidence to support the imputation be complete? and is it not in their possession? Is it reasonable to expect, that, in a war, waged not only for their security, but existence, they could be induced to be more attentive to our interests than their own? No, Sir, in my judgment, the period for efficient operation on that point, *through the agency of ministers*, has passed away. If the United States are willing, if it be their interest to resist, at all hazards, and by whomsoever attempted, the invasion of those Islands, the manifestation of that resolution, to be efficient, must proceed from another branch of the Government—the legislature. They are, fortunately, unfettered by diplomatic entanglements. If our deputies there cannot effect this object, what are they to do? Surely not to countenance measures which may be adopted by the assembled States against those Islands. This would be not only to counteract our views, but make ourselves, at once, a party to the war. Suppose, that, doing neither, they remain passive spectators, and the invasion is directed by the Congress. Being a war measure, all proceedings upon it must be secret. Can we hope to allay the awakened jealousies of Spain, that we have connived at, if not sanctioned, the invasion of her territory? Will we not, at all events, be driven to the necessity of extensive and humiliating explanations to the Government immediately concerned, and to those to whom we have made professions on the subject? Why thus embarrass ourselves? Why render our relations upon this subject more complicated than they are? Is it to favor Old Spain? No—we have uniformly disapproved and reprobated her conduct. We owe her nothing. Whatever we may say to the contrary, we know, and, what is more, the world knows, that it is solely on the ground of the utter helplessness of her condition, that we wish the continuance of her dominion over these Islands. To favor the Southern Republics? They do not admit that this is a subject in which we have any concern. It is not one in which they have asked or expect us to take a part. They know that we cannot interfere without violating our neutrality. They do not want our aid, and would only be embarrassed by our interference. Is it for the benefit of these Islands themselves? No—we have deliberately abandoned them to their fate. We have formal-

* This important letter has not been laid before the House of Representatives.

ly acquiesced in the hopelessness of their condition, and labored to make their connection with Spain indissoluble. In this particular, at least, our interference and our counsels have been adverse to those free and liberal principles, in whose success, in the South American States, we so justly and so cordially triumph. Such is now our embarrassing condition. How has it been produced? Is it not evidently the result of a course of measures which we seem determined to prosecute still farther? Is it not the fruit of over action, of an unwise anxiety to figure in great concerns? Of an ambition to take upon ourselves the business of other nations, to the prejudice, if not neglect of our own? How different would have been our condition, if instead of all this diplomacy, we had simply and plainly informed the Governments of Spanish America what we have said to the Powers of Europe; that we would not suffer the occupation of the Island of Cuba by any other Power except Spain, cost what it might. Depend upon it, sir, we should then have had no difficulties concerning Cuba; nor would we have been reduced to the necessity of sending deputies to the Congress of Panama, to extricate ourselves from the meshes of our own weaving.

But we are informed by the President, that we "*may exercise good offices, which may ultimately contribute to bring the war to a speedy termination.*" Where lies the difficulty, permit me to ask, in the way of pacification? With Old Spain? What is the great point in controversy? Independence. Shall we become the advocates of its surrender? Shall we urge upon the new Republics to purchase it by degrading concessions, or by any which they have not already evinced their willingness to make? Mexico and Columbia have already declared their readiness, upon the acknowledgment of their Independence, to desist from any attempts upon Cuba and Porto Rico. Their sincerity cannot be doubted. Have they any thing else to offer as the price of their recognition? Is it commercial preferences, the equivalent of Hayti to France?

The President intimates that, at times, they have evinced this disposition. But he would doubtless be the last to encourage a measure so fatal to our interests. Nothing therefore can be done, not already attempted without success. If we must appear in the office of mediators—an object of so much apparent solicitude with our Government—let our appeals be directed to Spain, where alone they can be availing. But, let us remember, that our admonitions, our remonstrances, our solicitations, will derive no additional weight from the circumstance that they emanate from the bosom of a Congress, composed, with the single exception of the United States, of the representatives of her confederate foes. Will we not, on the contrary, by the proposed step, render all our future efforts abortive? Shall we not, by it, have taken a stand, inconsistent with our assumed mediatorial office?

The next subject proposed by the President, is *the influence our*

Representatives at the proposed Congress, may have in promoting the advancement of religious liberty. Upon this subject he says, "There is yet another subject upon which, without entering into any treaty, the moral influence of the United States may, perhaps, be exerted, with beneficial consequences, at such a meeting—the advancement of religious liberty. Some of the Southern Nations are even yet so far under the dominion of prejudice, that they have incorporated with their *political constitutions* an exclusive church, without toleration of any other than the dominant sect. The abandonment of *this last badge of religious bigotry* may be pressed more effectually by the united exertions of those who concur in the principles of freedom of conscience, upon those who are yet to be convinced of their justice and wisdom, than by the solitary efforts of a minister to any one of the separate Governments."

The strong ground upon which this matter has been placed by the Committee, would render any thing like an elaborate discussion of it by me inexcusable. "That the Apostolic Roman Catholic Religion, shall be the religion of the State," is among the foremost articles in all the Constitutions of the Spanish American States, as it was in the late Constitution of Old Spain. It is not to be doubted, that most of the leaders in Old Spain, during the Constitutional Government, and the Patriots who achieved the independence of Spanish America, were as just and liberal in their religious, as they have shewn themselves to have been in their political principles! It is not within the laws of character like theirs, to be the advocates of intolerance of any description. It is, therefore, but fair to presume, that exertions in favor of religious toleration were omitted, from a conviction that they could not have been made without disturbing the public feeling to an extent injurious, if not destructive, to the great object of the Revolution.

This inference is fully confirmed by the testimony of those who have had opportunities to become acquainted with the subject. From these we learn that the establishment of the Roman Catholic Religion was a matter of indispensable necessity. They inform us, that the Patriot cause was greatly indebted for its success to the exertions of the lower order of Ecclesiastics, who, in opposition to the Bishops, threw the great weight of their influence into the Revolutionary scale: that all that order, and those they influence, constituting the physical force of the country, would, unhesitatingly, desert the party who abandoned what they honestly consider to be the only true faith. Add to these considerations the fact, that there are no sects in the country, and we will, perhaps, have more reason to commend the discretion of the Patriots in leaving that matter to the silent progress of liberality in public sentiment, than to censure their seeming insensibility to what the President justly regards as among the greatest of all human privileges—religious

freedom. It appears to me, (with deference to the high source from whence this suggestion proceeds,) that, from all we know of the great body of the people, nothing could have a greater tendency to defeat the objects of the Congress, and to endanger, if not destroy, the present order of things in Spanish America, than the promulgation of the idea that any change or modification in the religious establishment of the country, was, in any way, to be effected or accelerated at that assembly. If we send deputies there with any such views, however restricted in their powers, their arrival will be regarded as a calamity. The Committee have spoken with great truth of the public opinion in this country on the subject of interference, direct or indirect, with the internal concerns of other States, and especially of that most delicate of all subjects—the religion of its inhabitants. On a reference to the treaties between the confederate States, it will be seen that the views expressed are in strict conformity with theirs. It will be seen that, on this subject, they were not willing to trust to construction, but inserted express stipulations, against any interference with the internal concerns of the respective States.

[Mr. VAN BUREN said, that he had thus far discussed the subject without reference to the question, how far the adoption of the measures proposed would conflict with our neutral obligation, and thus conduce to a war with Spain. He then proceeded to the discussion of that branch of the subject; declaring, at the same time, that it had been so fully and so ably discussed by the gentleman from South Carolina, (Mr. HAYNE,) from New Hampshire, (Mr. WOODBURY,) and from Tennessee, (Mr. WHITE,) that he despaired of being able to do more than repeat objections which had already been urged with so much eloquence and ability. The remarks he made are not published. He then continued]—I will now, Mr. President, call the attention of the Senate to another view of this subject, to a question of the gravest character, and most deeply affecting the dearest interests of the country—a question growing out of considerations which have heretofore occupied the best minds, and interested the purest hearts our country has produced: “WOULD IT
“BE WISE IN US TO CHANGE OUR ESTABLISHED POLICY UPON THE
“SUBJECT OF POLITICAL CONNECTIONS WITH FOREIGN STATES;” The President has said, that, “to form alliances,” is not among the motives of our attendance at the Congress. But what description of alliance does he mean? They are of various kinds, and of different extent. We are, at that Congress, to stipulate in some form, (and I care not in what,) that we will resist any attempt at colonization by the Powers of Europe in this hemisphere, (or within our own borders if you please,) and that, in the event of any interference on their part, in the struggle between Spain and the Spanish American States, we will make common cause with the latter in

resisting it. To this end we have been invited, and upon these points we have promised that our ministers shall have *full powers*. We must do this, or the whole affair becomes empty pageantry ; which, though it may be the offspring of personal ambition, will assuredly terminate in national disgrace. Call it an "alliance," or whatever name you please, it is a *political connection*, at war with the established policy of our Government. And is this a light matter? Sir, when it is proposed to subvert a fundamental principle in our foreign policy, in the support of which we stand ALONE among all the nations of the earth—which, commencing with our Government, is endeared to the people, and upon whose deep foundations has been erected the magnificent superstructure of unequalled national prosperity ; it surely becomes those entrusted with the management of affairs, to pause, and weigh, with scrupulous exactness, the importance of the step.

In the discussion of this subject, I shall first consider the general principle ; then the grounds of the distinction attempted to be made between its application to the Spanish American States, and to those of Europe. At this moment, the United States, (thanks to the wisdom of their early counsels!) are unfettered. No Government has a right to demand our aid or interference in any of the changes in the condition of the world—come what may, we are now unembarrassed in our choice. Until lately, I had flattered myself that the acknowledged obligation on the part of our Government to maintain that condition, was as firmly fixed as its Republican character. I had the best reason to think so, because I knew it to be a principle in our public policy, which had for its support all that is instructive in experience, all that is venerable in authority. That authority is no less than the parting admonitions of the Father of his Country. The earnest, eloquent, and impressive appeals upon this subject, contained in his Farewell Address, are yet, and will, I trust, long remain fresh in our recollections ; nor were the sentiments he thus avowed mere speculative opinions, founded upon an abstract consideration of the subject. No ! they were sentiments matured by reflection, and confirmed by actual experience, of the practical results which had arisen from a connection of the character he so ardently and so justly deprecated. A reference to the history of that period will illustrate the fact, and is replete with instruction. During the war of our Revolution, we entered into an alliance with France, "the essential and direct end of which was to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty, and independence of the United States, absolute and unlimited, as well in matters of Government as of commerce." By the treaty of alliance, we, in consideration of the guarantee by France of the freedom and independence of the United States, undertook, on our part, to guaranty to France the possessions she then had

in America. The revolution in France involved that country in war with the principal Powers of Europe. Her American possessions were brought in danger; and, among other things, claimed under the treaty of alliance, she called upon us for the fulfilment of our guarantee. At no period of our history has our Government been placed in a more humiliating and embarrassing situation. The signal benefits we had received from France were known to the world, and fully appreciated by our citizens. Upon the terms of the compact there could be no dispute. The consideration upon which we had entered into it, was of the most sacred character. But the danger of compliance was imminent, and prevailed over every other consideration. Reposing itself upon the great principle of *self-preservation*—a principle extending itself as well to nations as individuals—our Government refused to comply with its engagement; and General Washington issued his celebrated proclamation of neutrality. The grounds relied upon to justify the step were, that our alliance was a *defensive* one only; that the war, on the part of France, was an *offensive* war, in which we were not obliged, by the law of nations, to take part; that the contest was, moreover, so unequal, and our means so inadequate, that, upon the principle of self-preservation, we were justified in refusing to take part with our ally. It was not expected that France would acquiesce in the validity of the grounds thus taken. She did not. The loud solemn protests of her Ministers are remembered; as, also, the measures resorted to for the purpose of obtaining, indirectly, some of the advantages claimed from the alliance: such as fitting out vessels of war in our ports, and enlisting our citizens in her service. England remonstrated, made strong imputations of partiality against our Government—imputations founded on suspicions growing out of the known connection between us and France—and resorted to similar means to annoy her enemies and commit our neutrality. General Washington found it impossible to satisfy either party of the strict impartiality that governed our conduct. The result was war, in fact, with France, and many of the evils of war with England. She enforced against our commerce new and unjustifiable principles of public law on the subject of blockades and articles contraband of war. The sagacious mind of Washington, and the great men who enjoyed his confidence, traced the multiplied embarrassments of the country at that trying period, to the *treaty of alliance with France*. Had it not been for that, the task of preserving our neutrality would have been comparatively easy. There would then have been wanting those great sources of discord, unsatisfied claims of right on the part of one belligerent, and food for jealousy on the other. It was under a deep conviction of this truth, that that inestimable man was induced to address his countrymen in language like this. I will make no apology for reading it. I hope to God that the time will never arrive when an

apology will be necessary for reading any thing to an American Senate, emanating from him, and bearing upon a question before it.

Extracts from the Farewell Address of General Washington.

“ The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little *political* connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith.—Here let us stop.

“ Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations of her friendships or enmities.

“ Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient Government, the period is not far off, when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon, to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

“ Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?

“ ’Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it: for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise, to extend them.”

“ In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But, if I may even flatter myself, that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that

“ they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit; to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue; to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated.”

His language was prophetic. “ His admonition did not make the strong and lasting impression he wished.” At the extra session of Congress, in May, 1797, his successor, in his Message to that body, thus expressed himself:

Extract from the Message of President Adams to Congress, in 1798.

“ Although it is very true, that we ought not to involve ourselves in the political system of Europe, but to keep ourselves distinct and separate from it, if we can; yet to effect this separation, *early, punctual, and continual information of the current chain of events, and of the political projects in contemplation*, is no less necessary than if we were directly concerned in them. It is necessary, in order to the discovery of the efforts made to draw us into the vortex, in season to make preparations against them. However we may consider ourselves, the maritime and commercial Powers of the world will consider the United States of America as *forming a weight in that balance of power in Europe, which never can be forgotten or neglected*. It would not only be against our interest, but it would be doing wrong to one-half of Europe at least, if we should voluntarily throw ourselves into either scale. *It is a natural policy* for a nation that studies to be neutral, *to consult with other nations engaged in the same studies and pursuits*. At the same time that *measures ought to be pursued with this view*, our treaties with Prussia and Sweden, one of which is expired, and the other near expiring, might be renewed.”

This communication was followed by the nomination of a minister (the present President of the United States,) to Berlin, to carry into effect, the avowed object of the mission. This early departure from the principles and disregard of the precepts of Washington, was met by the united and most vigorous opposition of the Republicans of that day. An attempt was first made in the Senate to defeat the mission, on the ground of its *inexpediency*. That failing, the appropriation was resisted in the House of Representatives, in a debate that lasted for several weeks. It was the direct cause of the first great collision, between the Republicans of that day, and the then President. A singular and extraordinary similarity will be found between the question then agitated, and the one now under discussion. It was then contended that the United States ought to *consult* with other nations engaged in the same studies and *pursuits*, and that *measures ought to be pursued* with that view. Those measures were understood to be the formation of political connections, (beyond the ordinary commercial

treaties,) in order to secure co-operation in support of their common interest; and further, that it belonged to the President to decide on the question of the propriety of a mission for that purpose, and that the Senate were only to pass on the fitness of the persons nominated. What is now contended for, and what the policy we resist? That, having a common interest with the Spanish American States, we ought to meet with them in Congress; in the language of the Secretary of State, speaking in the name of the President, for the purpose of "settling several important questions of public law, "and arranging other matters of deep interest to the American "Continent." What those matters are, and how they are to be arranged, has, I hope, been fully developed; and further, that "*this measure is deemed to be within the Constitutional competency of the "Executive ;*" that we are only consulted to obtain our opinion on its "expediency," and because it is necessary to come to us for "an appropriation, without which, the measure cannot be carried into effect." Yes, sir, the first blow that was struck in that great contest, which subsequently convulsed the country, and the first voice that was raised to arrest the current of events then setting in, were on points, to all substantial purposes, identical with the present. Is it not a startling, if not an ominous circumstance, that, so soon, under the present administration, we should have presented to us, in such bold relief, doctrines and principles, which, in the first year of that to which I have referred, laid the foundation of the most bitter and unrelenting feuds? Does the analogy stop here? The men who then opposed the mission to Berlin were denounced as oppositionists; as a faction who sought the gratification of their personal views, at the expense of the public good; they were lampooned, and vilified by all the presses supporting and supported by the government, and a host of malicious parasites generalised by its patronage. Their weight of character, the purity of their lives, the consistency of their principles, and their force of reasoning, were alike unavailing. It was sufficient that they dared to think for themselves; to prefer what they regarded as the interests of their constituents to the wishes of the Executive; to refuse a ready acquiescence in what was given them to do; and every puny whipster in the land felt himself at liberty, without in the least understanding the question involved, to misrepresent their acts, and impugn their motives. Respect for this body, and a just contempt for the venal efforts of venal men, restrains me from pushing the parallel farther. Covering themselves with the mantle of Washington, the Republicans of '98 labored manfully to strangle, at its birth, this political hydra, this first attempt, since the establishment of the government, to subject our political affairs to the terms and conditions of a political connexion, with any foreign nation. I ask the indulgence of the Senate, whilst I read a short

extract from a most able speech, made on that occasion by a man whom Mr. Jefferson described as being, in that stormy period, "the main mast of the ship." It shews the striking analogy between the questions.

Extract from the Speech of Albert Gallatin on foreign intercourse.

"The President of the United States conceives that it is a natural policy for us to *consult* with other nations engaged in the same studies and pursuits, and that *measures* ought to be *pursued* with this view. The late President thinks it unwise, by interweaving our destiny with Europe, to entangle our peace, unwise to implicate ourselves by artificial ties, unwise and unnecessary to extend our engagements. His opinion is emphatically expressed by these words, 'Here let us stop.'

"But if we adopt the policy to *consult* with other nations—if measures are to be pursued with that view—if we are to form new foreign political connections; how can we hope to escape being unavoidably drawn into the vortex? It was, after having thus communicated his intention—it was in pursuance of that plan, that the President thought fit to send a minister to Berlin. With Prussia, we have no commerce. Had commerce been the object of that embassy, Sweden, Denmark, the Hanse-towns, or Italy, would have been preferred. The mission is avowedly and evidently of a political nature, and, if we are to consult and to form connections with nations, who may, in our opinion, be engaged in similar pursuits with ourselves—if Prussia is considered as such—with what nation in Europe, may we not and shall we not, according to circumstances, consult, concert measures, and form political arrangements? It is from this view of the subject, that I have been induced, however reluctantly, fully to state all the reasons which impress upon my mind a conviction of the importance of the present amendment, of the importance of checking at this time, and in its birth, a system which tends to increase our political connections with Europe."

Mr. Gallatin was not alone: Macon, Nicholas, and a host of others, associated with him, in defence of principles, in their view, vitally important to the future prosperity of the country. Far beyond the reach of Executive patronage, they boldly contended for a principle taught by Washington, and which has since been consecrated by the approving voice of the People. Their labors shared the fate which, in all probability, awaits the exertions of those who, at this day, maintain their doctrines. They were outmustered at roll-call. *They* failed, mark it, by a majority of *four*. The force of Executive patronage, aided by a venal press, was too strong for them. But of what avail was success to their adversaries? A few more such victories, and their ruin was complete. The one party succeeded in the House, but the other out

of it. The seed then sown took root. The doctrines of the dominant party, inherently unsound, stood rebuked before the power and eloquence of their adversaries, and speedily received the condemnation of the People ; whilst the opposing principle, the principle for which we now contend, was rescued from the attack that was made upon it, and once more registered among the special canons of the American policy. Its advocates lived to see it placed upon a footing which they had every reason to believe would last, at least, the short period of their existence. But how uncertain are all things! "Let no man boast of to-morrow, for he knoweth not what a day may bring forth." The events of the last month form a striking commentary upon the text. It is now twenty-eight years since this transaction took place, and there are yet two persons on this floor who acted and voted together upon that great question. It has been to me a matter of much interest to witness their course at this day. Of the one I cannot speak, but hope for the best. The sentiments of the other (Mr. MACON) are on record. He is yet the same unwavering Republican that he was in '98. The principle now involved is the same as then. When that is ascertained, he exhibits neither trembling nor hesitation. With a mind vigorous, though mellowed by experience, firmly relying on the Republic, he follows the maxims of his early years. The circumstances under which I speak restrains me. But this much I will say : The man who has occupied a seat here and in the other House, during every administration of the Government, from the second year of its institution to the present day, and who has been wise enough to estimate, at their value, the miserable illusions of Executive favor, and who prefers the approbation of his own conscience to the meretricious smile of power ; who can look back upon a life thus spent, with an entire consciousness that he never, in a single instance, postponed the interests of his constituents to promote his own ; deserves to be regarded as a monument of fidelity and consistency, alike honorable to his State, and beneficial to his country. But to return to the circumstances of that eventful period : The ball of political revolution, which was set in motion by the debate on the Berlin Mission, was pressed rapidly forward by successive measures of equally exceptionable character, until finally it effected the total overthrow of the party then in power, and the elevation of Mr. Jefferson to the Presidential chair. The creed of this great father of our political church, was, "Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations ; entangling alliances with none : " In strict conformity to the principle of Washington, advising an "extension of our commercial relations, but as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith ; *but here let us stop !*"

During the whole of Mr. Jefferson's administration, the whole of Mr. Madison's, and the first four years of Mr. Monroe's, (with a single attempted exception,) the principles avowed by the two great founders of the Republic were respected, and the result was good. The exception to which I allude was this : Influenced by that deep solicitude for the welfare of our Western brethren, which always has, and I trust always will, influence the councils of the country, the Government was, in 1803, induced to offer, through Mr. Pinckney, our Minister at Madrid, "to guaranty to the King of Spain, and his successors, his dominions beyond the Mississippi," if he would sell to the United States his possession between that and the river Mobile. The desire to obtain the cession, it is well known, grew out of the dispute relative to the navigation of the Mississippi, and the questions connected therewith. In the discussion with our Government, in 1818, relative to the cession of the Floridas, Spain brought forward that offer in 1803, claiming that it proposed a guarantee of her territory as far as the Isthmus of *Panama*, and desiring to make it a condition of the cession. The change of circumstances since produced in Spanish America, had taught her the immense value of the guarantee. Our Minister at Madrid (Mr. Ervine,) denied that such an offer had ever been made. Mr. Pinckney's letter was produced. A controversy succeeded as to its construction ; which resulted in an explicit declaration that, under no circumstances, would the United States make the guarantee in question. The altered state of things had shewn that a stipulation, from which no harm was apprehended in 1800. could not, in 1818, be listened to for a moment. By sheer good fortune we escaped from this entangling connexion. What, sir, would have been the probable consequences, if Spain had accepted the guarantee which was claimed to have been offered ? Instead of being the great patron of the Spanish American cause, we might, at this moment, have been engaged in a war, either with Mexico, for attempting to fulfil, or with Spain, for violating our guarantee ; and yet, with all the lights of experience before our eyes, it is desired to hurry us into similar compacts, the consequences of which we cannot foresee, but which we well know may, by the course of events, compel us either to violate our plighted faith, or act against what may hereafter appear to be our best interests.

Our next attempt to form a foreign connexion, other than commercial, was the negotiation of treaties of concert and co-operation with England and the Republic of Colombia, on the subject of the Slave Trade. A brief sketch of the course and consequences of that ill-judged measure, will not be without instruction upon the subject before us. From 1794 to 1808, when the constitutional inhibition upon Congress in relation to the slave trade expired, a

system of wise, and, as far as the power of the Government extended, efficient legislation, was adopted for the suppression of that detestable traffic. From the latter period to the year 1819, our legislation assumed a wider range, and still more efficient character, until, finally, the offence was denounced as piracy, the punishment due to that crime prescribed, and the Executive clothed with power and means fully adequate to the execution of the law and the suppression of the trade; so far at least as our citizens were concerned. The measures then adopted, effected the purpose for which they were designed. They did more. They extorted from England, who, next to the United States, has recently been foremost in the adoption of means to this end, the unqualified admission, not only that the United States had been the first, but also the most successful, laborers in the cause of humanity.

Thus matters stood at the period which I have mentioned. Our Government, unfortunately not content with *well*, must seek for *better*, and the negotiations of which I speak were opened. So too with our affairs with the Spanish American States; they stand well; we have done all they expected of us, and more than they had a right to ask. What we have done, has reflected credit upon us, and has been serviceable to them. Not content with this, we are hurrying on in the usual course: partial success is leading us to injurious excess. But to return: the President negotiated a treaty with England, yielding, under certain modifications, the right of search, and authorizing a foreign power to enforce our own laws upon our own citizens. I need not state to this body the fate of that ill advised project. The treaty was defeated by a vote of the Senate. A similar one with the Republic of Colombia shared the same fate; and, although the vote against the English treaty was small, so rapidly did the sentiment of opposition to the principle increase, that the rejection of the latter treaty, at a subsequent session, was nearly unanimous. Who is there now on this floor, that would give his vote in favor of a similar measure? But it seems that the light of experience has been shed in vain upon this obstinate propensity to figure in the diplomacy necessarily growing out of foreign connection. The results of the particular measures now referred to, were, as we all remember, contention at home, and dissatisfaction abroad; a correspondence with England, of not the most friendly character, in which long explanations were made necessary of the character of our Government, to satisfy other powers that the President was not responsible for the act of the Senate. Explanations were made with great ability by the then Secretary of State, and subsequently enforced with equal ability by the present Secretary. The matter was understood here, and perhaps by the Governments to whom those explanations were made; but, to a great part of the world, it appeared that the zeal of

the United States for the suppression of the slave trade, had abated. The high character we had acquired, for our early and unceasing labors in that great cause, was not indeed destroyed : for that could not be easily effected ; but our motives were exposed to misconstruction, and are now misrepresented by those who do not understand the structure of our Government. Such, sir, was the consequence of this third attempt to surrender the control of our conduct in the support of our rights, or the discharge of our duties, to foreign association : such the penalty of disregarding the warning voice of Washington—"never abandon our own to stand on foreign ground." Such are among the least evils that have, sooner or later, in a greater or less degree, been the consequence of political connexions between different nations, at all times, and in all places. Permit me to refer the Senate to a transaction of the same character between other States. In 1815, the Plenipotentiaries from the five great European Powers, viz: England, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, convened at Vienna, declared to the world that they would unite their means for the effectual suppression of the slave trade. The settlement of those means was deferred to a future period. At the conference of the Plenipotentiaries of the same Powers, in 1818, at Aix la Chapelle, an attempt was made to agree upon the means necessary to effect their declared object. Then occurred, what always will occur, except in cases of great emergency—like the recent coalitions among the Powers of Europe against that of Napoleon, when the very existence of several of the allied powers, was involved—the difficulty of agreeing upon the terms of co-operation among nations having different interests, feelings, prejudices, and views. England proposed the extension of the right of search, as the only means adapted to the end. Negotiation was commenced and continued, until, finally, the measure proposed by England was refused, or evaded, by all the Powers, and the conference dissolved, leaving the celebrated declaration made at Vienna unexecuted, and producing naught but mutual distrust and dissatisfaction. Thus shewing how easy it is for nations to unite in the avowal of a general principle—how difficult to agree upon the *means* of enforcing it. So will it be with us and our South American friends and neighbors. There may be little difficulty in uniting in avowing as a principle, that these continents are no longer fit subjects for European colonization, or to protest against the interference of Europe in the affairs of Spanish America. But the moment we proceed to stipulate as to the *means* of enforcing it, difficulties will occur that, in all human probability, will impair the friendly relations now existing between us. They will occur first in the negotiation, and, if these are surmounted, certainly in the application of the principles established, when the time for their application unhappily occurs:

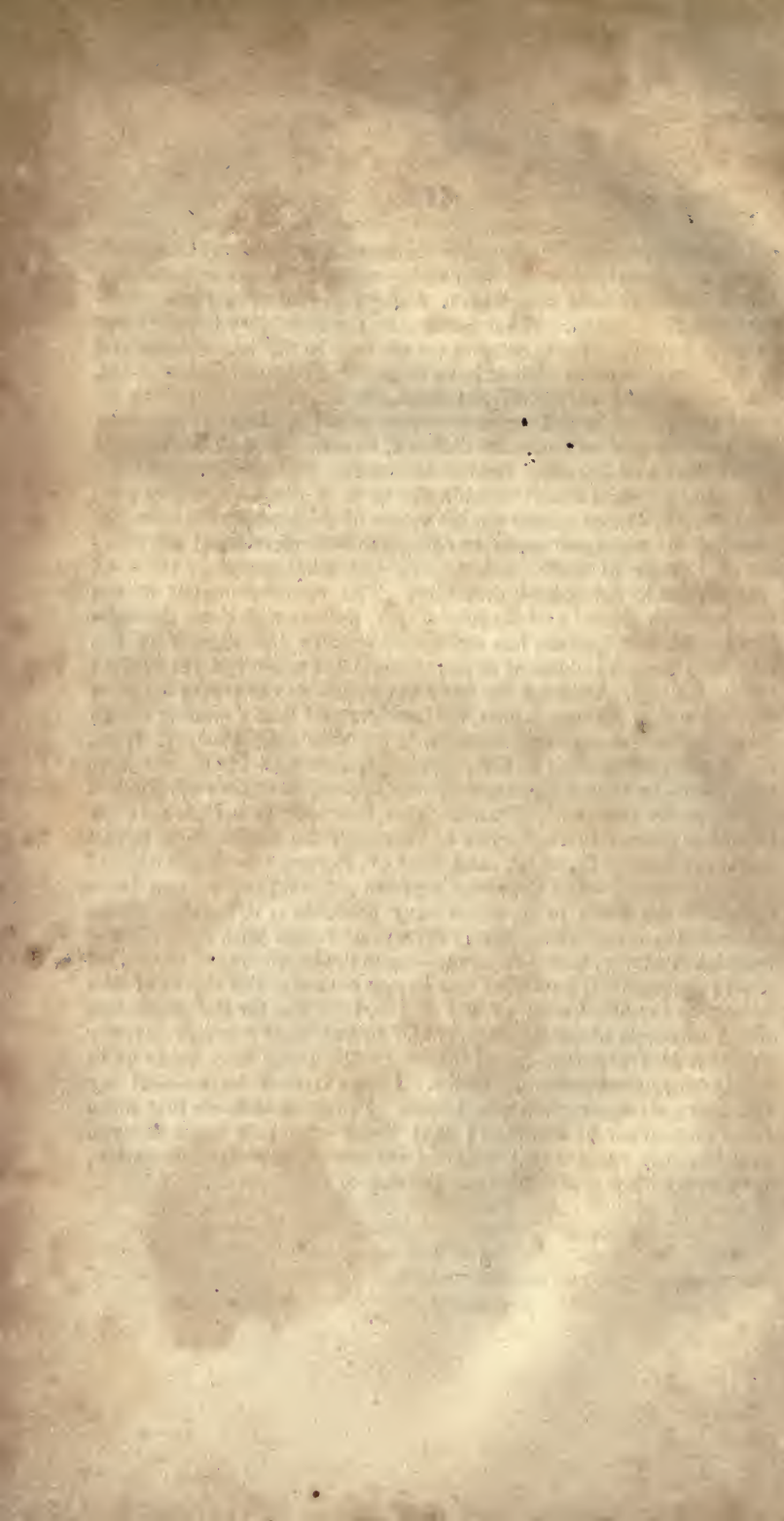
But I cannot consent to trespass longer upon the time of the Senate in pushing the discussion of this point further, although various considerations, operating against the measure, press upon my mind. If it were proposed to form a connection with any European Power, such as now designed with the Spanish American States, it is hoped and believed, that the measure would not meet with one approving voice—shall I say—on this floor? No, not in the country.—But it has been supposed that the United States ought to pursue a different policy with respect to the States in this hemisphere. It is true, Mr. Monroe in his message, makes a distinction of this character, although he by no means carries it to the extent proposed. If he did, all that the distinction could derive from that circumstance, would be the weight of his opinion, always considerable, but never decisive. The question still recurs, is the distinction founded in principle and policy? If it be, it must arise from one of two reasons: either the *character* of the Governments of the Spanish American States, or their *local situation*; or, perhaps, from both. The United States have hailed the emancipation of those States with satisfaction; they have our best wishes for the perpetuity of their freedom. So far as we could go to aid them in the establishment of their independence, without endangering the peace, or embarrassing the relations of our country, we have gone. More than that ought not to be asked. Nor has it. Sensible of the embarrassments which their invitation might produce, they declined to proffer it until advised that we desired to receive it. Next to being right, it is important to Governments, as well as individuals, to be consistent. Has the character of these Governments been the principle upon which we have hitherto acted in relation to those States? It has not. Mexico and Brazil were the last to shake off their dependence on foreign authority. They were among the first whose independence we acknowledged. Mexico was, at the period of its acknowledgment, under the dominion of the Emperor Iturbide, and Brazil, of its Emperor, Don Pedro. As a special compliment to the Emperor of Mexico, we sent, or rather intended to send to his *Court*, one of the most distinguished men of the nation, (General JACKSON.) At the Court of the Emperor Don Pedro, we have our Minister; whilst in the Republic of Peru—the Power with which the first of the treaties, in virtue of which the Congress of Panama is to be held, was concluded—we have not yet been represented. Do our principles admit that we should adopt the measure proposed with such reference, and upon such grounds? What are those principles? That man is capable of self-government; that the People of every country should be left to the free selection of such form of Government as they think best adapted to their situation, and to change it as their interests, in their own judgments, may seem to require. Wherein consists our objections to

the Holy Alliance? Because they confederate to maintain Governments similar to their own by force of arms, instead of the force of reason, and the will of the governed. If we, too, confederate to sustain, by the same means, Governments similar to our own, wherein consists the difference, except the superiority of our cause? What is their avowed motive? *Self-preservation and the peace of Europe*. What would be ours? *Self-preservation and the peace of America*. I wish to be understood. I detest as much as any man, the principles of the Holy Alliance. I yield to no man in my anxious wishes for the success of the Spanish American States. I will go as far as I think any American citizen ought to go, to secure to them the blessings of free Government. I commend the solicitude which has been manifested by our Government upon this subject, and have, of course, no desire to discourage it. But I am against all alliances, against all armed confederacies, or confederacies of any sort. I care not how specious, or how disguised; come in what shape they may, I oppose them. The States in question have the power and the means, if united and true to their principles, to resist any force that Europe can send against them. It is only by being recreant to the principles upon which their Revolution is founded; by suffering foreign influence to distract and divide them; that their independence can be endangered. But, happen what may, our course should be left to our choice, whenever occasion for acting shall occur. If, in the course of events, designs shall be manifested, or steps taken in this hemisphere by any foreign Power, which so far affect our interest or our honor, as to make it necessary that we should arm in their defence, it will be done: there is no room to doubt it.

The decision of that question may safely be left to those who come after us. That love of country and of freedom which now animates our public councils, is not confined to us, or likely to be come extinct. We require neither alliance nor agreement to compel us to perform whatever our duty enjoins. Our national character is our best and should be our only pledge. Meanwhile, let us bestow upon our neighbors, the young Republics of the South, the moral aid of a good example. To make that example more salutary, let it exhibit our moderation in success, our firmness in adversity, our devotion to our country and its institutions, and, above all, that *sine qua non* to the existence of our Republican Government—*our fidelity to a written Constitution*.

The local situation of the States in question does not alter the principle, but only bears upon the expediency of the measure. What is the reason why foreign connections were deprecated by Washington, and have, since his day, been avoided by our country? It is because, between foreign Governments and our own, there are diversities in situation, interest, feeling, prejudice, and views, which

preclude the probability of preserving the relations we may form with them, and greatly increase the contingencies by which our country may become involved with others. Apply this reason to the Governments of New Spain. Wherein consists the similarity between our condition and theirs, except that we are both in this hemisphere, and that, at this time, most of them have Republican forms of Government, but with powers very different from ours. We are unlike in all other things. The difference between us is infinitely greater, and the intercourse less and more difficult, than between us and several of the States of Europe. Recent circumstances have increased the danger of political connection, in the form of alliances, of any sort, with them. The supposed pacific views of the Emperor Alexander afforded the strongest security against the interference of the Powers of Europe in their affairs. His death has certainly involved that matter in doubt and difficulty. The commencement of the war between Brazil and Buenos Ayres, ascertained since this subject has been before us, has multiplied greatly the danger of the step, and should induce us to pause while the matter is yet subject to our control. Although we have not before us the treaty between Colombia and Buenos Ayres, it is understood that a similar one to those we have, has been entered into between those Powers. If so, if the confederation is so far completed, then will the other Spanish American States be bound to make common cause with Buenos Ayres in the war with Brazil. The Emperor Don Pedro is the lawful successor to the throne of Portugal; the territory of Brazil is guaranteed by Portugal, and that of Portugal by England. If such is the case—and so, speaking from general recollection, I understand the facts to be—how very probable is it that the *casus fœderis*, the interference of any European Power with the affairs of Spanish America, will soon occur—upon the happening of which, we are to plunge this, now free and happy country, the object of the envy and the admiration of the world, into war for the protection of the interests of our neighbors, and to *testify, at this late day, our devotion to free principles*. Sir, our good fortune may guide us in safety through these difficulties. I hope it may be so—but my fears are stronger than my hopes. I pray to Heaven that those fears may never be realized; that those who now move Heaven and Earth to press this ill-omened measure to its consummation, may never have occasion to rue the day of its adoption.



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